ROCKAWAY BOROUGH WELL FIELD

NEW JERSEY

EPA ID# NJD980654115

EPA REGION 2
CONGRESSIONAL DIST. 11
Morris County
Rockaway Township

Site Description

The Rockaway Borough Well Field site covers a 2-square-mile area and includes three municipal water supply wells, which are located in a glacial aquifer designated by EPA as the sole source aquifer for Rockaway Borough and the surrounding communities. Eight other wells previously used for potable water supply by the Borough were abandoned because of their lack of productivity. In 1980, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were detected in the municipal wells. The contaminated wells are close to the Rockaway River, which runs through the Borough. The site is located in a suburban residential setting and is surrounded by homes, businesses, and municipal property. The Borough of Rockaway's municipal wells supply potable water to about 11,000 people.

Site Responsibility:

This site is being addressed through Federal and potentially responsible party actions.

NPL LISTING HISTORY
Proposed Date: 12/01/82
Final Date: 09/01/83

Threats and Contaminants

Although 13 VOCs have been detected in the well water, trichloroethylene (TCE) and tetrachloroethylene (PCE) are the primary contaminants of concern. The contaminated well water is treated to drinking water standards before being supplied to the residents of Rockaway Borough.

Cleanup Approach

This site is being addressed in three stages: initial actions and two long-term remedial actions focusing on cleanup of groundwater and the sources of the contamination.

Response Action Status

Initial Actions: In 1981, an emergency was declared due to the groundwater contamination, and the residents supplied by the distribution system were advised not to use their tap water for drinking and cooking. Temporary drinking water supplies were trucked in by the National Guard. In 1981, the Borough installed an activated carbon water treatment system to reduce contaminant concentrations. Rockaway Borough has since upgraded its existing treatment system with the installation of an air stripper to ensure compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act standards.

Groundwater: In March 1985, the State initiated an investigation at the site which confirmed the presence of VOC contamination in the groundwater. A Record of Decision (ROD) signed on September 29, 1986, called for the continuation of the existing well-head treatment system and further study to identify sources and to delineate the full extent of contamination. EPA subsequently completed a supplemental study involving the identification of contaminant source areas, further delineation of the extent of groundwater contamination, and evaluation of additional alternatives for final groundwater cleanup. EPA's supplemental study identified two separate plumes of groundwater contamination. In a second operable unit ROD signed on September 30, 1991, EPA selected a remedial action which entails extracting and treating contaminated groundwater to restore the aquifer. The remedy includes: (1) the installation of extraction wells; (2) treatment of extracted groundwater by chemical precipitation and air stripping; (3) reinjection of treated groundwater; and (4) appropriate environmental monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the remedy. In April 1998, Rockaway Borough expressed an interest in obtaining the treated water for use by its water utility, however, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection indicated that state regulations prohibit such use. The design of the remedy for both plumes is currently in progress and is being performed by Alliant Techsystems, Inc., which acquired Cordant Technologies (formerly known as Thiokol Corporation) in April 2001. The design is expected to be complete for one of the plumes by the end of the year. Alliant will perform the remedial action for this plume. The design for the remaining plume will be completed in mid 2002 for which EPA will perform the remedial action.

Source Control: Additional investigations to further delineate potential contamination within the immediate source areas are necessary. A subsequent operable unit is currently in progress to evaluate the need for remediation of potential contaminant sources. The investigations will be completed by late 2003.

Site Facts: EPA identified six parties potentially responsible for the contamination at the site and issued Special Notice letters providing them the opportunity to perform or finance the Remedial Design and Remedial Action. EPA reached a settlement with Cordant Technologies (formerly known as Thiokol Corporation and now a part of Alliant Techsystems, Inc.). A Consent Decree was entered with the Federal District Court in Newark, New Jersey on October 26, 1994. Under this Consent Decree, Cordant agreed to perform the remedial design for the entire site and the cleanup of contaminated groundwater for a portion of the site. The settlement also required Cordant to pay Rockaway Borough's water treatment operation costs and $800,000 of EPA's past response costs.

EPA has also reached a settlement with the remaining PRPs for reimbursement of additional past response costs.

Discussions with one of the remaining PRPs also resulted in the signing of an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) on September 27, 1995 to perform an RI/FS for the third operable unit on the Klockner and Klockner Property. The Klockner and Klockner Property RI/FS field work has been completed and an RI report is scheduled to be submitted to EPA for review in June 2002. EPA has also initiated an RI/FS to characterize the third operable unit for the Wall Street portion of the Rockaway Borough Well Field site. Field work is expected to begin in the spring of 2002.

Cleanup Progress 

EPA has selected a final cleanup approach for the remediation of groundwater at the Rockaway Borough Well Field site. The installation of a water treatment system by the Borough has significantly reduced the threat of exposure to contaminants in drinking water while activities leading to the final cleanup take place.